

NEWS RELEASE



MISSOURI STATE WATER PATROL P.O. Box 1368, Jefferson City, MO 65102

a division of the
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Colonel Jerry E. Adams, Commissioner

Jefferson City, Missouri (August 26, 2003) Labor Day marks the end of summer for most Americans. It can also mark a big weekend for accidents. The Water Patrol will be working extended shifts and targeting areas where violations result in higher risk of accident involvement. The chance of being involved in an accident cannot be completely alleviated but can be reduced by using good judgement, courtesy, common sense and knowledge of the laws.

"Boat operators need to recognize that factors such as speed, recklessness and impaired operation can create a deadly combination," said Colonel Jerry Adams, Commissioner of the Missouri State Water Patrol. "The added combination of wind, sun, noise, vibration and the motion of the water all intensify the effects of alcohol and drugs, compounding danger."

Each year nearly 80 percent of those who drowned as a result of boating accidents were not wearing life jackets. Accident risks are increased at busy times such as Labor Day weekend, where recreational boats clog popular lakes and rivers. "Thousands of people would be alive today if they had taken the simple precaution of wearing a life jacket before they went out on the water," said Virgil Chambers, Executive Director of the National Safe Boating Council. "With new, more comfortable and less restrictive life jackets, it's easier than ever to wear one."

Here are a few safety tips.

1. **Wear a life jacket.** Approximately 80% of the victims in fatal boating accidents aren't wearing life jackets.
2. **Don't drink and boat.** Up to 50% of fatal boating accidents involve alcohol use.
3. **Watch your speed.** With increased speed comes less reaction time when confronted with near miss/hit situations.
4. **Attach your emergency ignition safety switch lanyard** to yourself in the event of a fall overboard. This will shut the engine off and prevent the vessel from circling back on you.
5. **Avoid** congested areas and don't jump wakes.
6. **Keep a sharp lookout** and steer well clear of other craft.
7. **Don't overload your boat.**
8. **Know before you go.** Operators should be familiar with the laws and safe boating practices prior to getting on the water. Getting a weather forecast before leaving the dock and watching current conditions as they may develop will assist boaters in avoiding potentially dangerous situations.

Boat Smart, Boat Safe, and Wear It

Remember, there is a new law effective January 2005 that mandates operators of vessels on the lakes of the state born after January 1, 1984 must take a boating safety education course. Watch the Missouri State Water Patrol homepage at www.mswp.state.mo.us for updates on Boating Safety Courses and News Releases in your area.

For further information contact:

Sergeant Paul E. Kennedy, Director
Public Information & Safety Education
Phone: (573)-751-3333
Fax: (573)-522-1287
E-mail: pkennedy@mswp.state.mo.us